

8-22-1994

# Oral History Transcription with Hilda Espling & Doris Espling

Hilda Espling

Doris Espling

Lisbeth Norrback

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalmaine.com/stockholm\\_docs](http://digitalmaine.com/stockholm_docs)

---

## Recommended Citation

Espling, Hilda; Espling, Doris; and Norrback, Lisbeth, "Oral History Transcription with Hilda Espling & Doris Espling" (1994). *Stockholm Documents*. 28.  
[http://digitalmaine.com/stockholm\\_docs/28](http://digitalmaine.com/stockholm_docs/28)

This Text is brought to you for free and open access by the Stockholm, Maine at Maine State Documents. It has been accepted for inclusion in Stockholm Documents by an authorized administrator of Maine State Documents. For more information, please contact [statedocs@maine.gov](mailto:statedocs@maine.gov).

HISTORY WITH HILDA AND DORIS ESPLING

Mother and Daughter Respectively

22-14 Pioneer St.

Caribou, Maine

August 22, 1994

Interviewer: Lisbeth Norrback

Video Camera: Richard Hede

Richard: I sprained my leg today.

Hilda: Oh, you did?

Richard: So I'm limping.

Hilda: Oh, that's too bad.

Ricard: So that's why I have the crutch. But I guess if I take it easy it'll work out O.K. Ja, you know I don't know if anyone interviewed you before or not. Two, three years ago we did quite a lot of interviews. I just don't remeber if the girls came down here or not. But anyway we do these interviews and put the in the museum in New Sweden and Lisbeth works at the University of Maine.

Hilda (to Lisbeth:) You want an outlet, huh?

Lisbeth: There's one right back there.

Hida: Can you get there alright? O.K.

Richard: So the University of Maine also does some of this. So we are working together and we'll have one copy here in New Sweden and one copy at Orono. We'll let you listen to it when we are all through. Come back sometime and let you listen to it, see if everything sounds O.K. with you and then when we have time we'll transcribe it onto paper and let you read that. So, I have to go and do some other things this afternoon, so Lisbeth will stay here.

Some dialogue at this point about technical difficulties.

Richard: So I am going to go and do some other errands and Lisbeth will stay here and talk with you. If you want us to stop and take a rest at any time, you just say so and she'll stop and you could have a little rest and you could start again or whatever.

Lisbeth: We're going to try and have a little fun!

Hilda: What am I supposed to talk about?

Richard: You'll find lots to talk about.

Lisbeth: What you remember. Things you remember!

Richard: I think she remembers back more than a hundred years.

Lisbeth: This isn't a test or anything.

Richard: You know it's a funny thing I ask Alwin Espling questions from way before he was born, way back 1890, 1900's and he remembers all of that. He's been told it so many times he remembers what happened way back in 1900. So you probably do too.

Hilda: Well I don't know I don't remember things so well as I did.

Richard: Ah, well.

Hilda: And I forget.

Richard: But we would like to know all about New Sweden and Westmanland and all about your family and all about all the other people and Lisbeth has got lots of things she's interested in. So I started mine up already.

Lisbeth: Alright, great.

Richard: If you stop at some point there's a little red button back here, right back here.

Lisbeth: And just press it.

Richard: Push it to turn it off and push it to turn it on again.

Lisbeth: And you know you have a clear picture.

Richard: Where are you going to sit by the way.

Lisbeth: Right here.

Richard: I won't be able to get you over there.

Lisbeth: Well, How about I sit right here. (indicating seat next to Hilda).

Richard: Well, that might be better.

Lisbeth: Better?

Richard: Yes, I think so.

Lisbeth: I don't want to be in the picture!

Richard: Ya, ya, that's good!

Lisbeth: O.K. Terrific, I'll sit over here. I'm just going to get the tape recorder going, so that I know the sound is good. This is a new toy for me (referring to the tape recorder) the University gave it to me this morning.

Richard: Well if we have two of them going one or the other ought to work.

Lisbeth: That's right.

Technical dialogue between Richard and Lisbeth

Lisbeth: Hi, my name is Lisbeth Norrback. I am here in Caribou, Maine with Richard Hede and Hilda Espling. Is that right? Hilda, ja, and Hilda, you are going to be a hundred this year? Is that right? When is your birthday? Twentieth of November?

Hilda: November 12.

Lisbeth: November 12. Well, congratulations!

Richard: Ja, gee!

Lisbeth: Well, that's quite something! Allright, I'm just going to test this and make sure this is going to work. Testing, one, two, three.

Doris Espling enters and takes a chair next to her mother Hilda Espling.  
Some Misc. dialogue, last, minute stuff before actual interview.

Hilda: I never remember when my folks came from Sweden. (To Doris)

Doris: Was it August 1897?

Richard: So 1897, huh?

Doris: Ja, Mom was two almost three.

Richard: And here maiden name was Hedstrom. We put here on Hilda and this is Doris, the other one. (Thereby indicating she has now joined the interview.)

Lisbeth: We are going to start again, anyway. That was just my little test.

Richard: You know I was saying earlier if you and your Mom want to stop. Just stop and take a little rest.

If I may use your telephone I'm going to call Phil Petersen and ask him to come and pick up Lisbeth when you get all through.

Doris: Oh, I see.

Lisbeth: I'm staying at the Caribou Motor Inn. My car is down there but Richard has been kind enough to drive me around, since I don't know my way around here.

Doris: Well, of course, it's your first visit.

Lisbeth; No, I've been up twice before this summer.

Doris: Oh, you have. So you're the one who talked to Charlene Espling.

Lisbeth: Yes that's right. That's right! This has been my job at the University for the summer. To research the community up here.

Doris: Oh, is that so.

Lisbeth: So, that's what's brought me up here.

Doris: I see.

Lisbeth: Now we are up here to do oral histories, to preserve some of the heritage, of what's in the area.

Doris: Oh, I see! I hope we can come up with the facts.

Lisbeth: It doesn't have to be, you know, we aren't looking for specific days or times. It's more of a feeling of the flavor of the community.

Richard on the phone to Phil Petersen.

Lisbeth in the background of Richard's phone conversation, saying facts can be gathered if and when necessary; the importance of this being more on telling stories.

Richard finishes up phone conversation.

Richard: He isn't there at the moment.

Lisbeth: If you could just leave me his phone number. I want to write that down. Did I pack my pen?  
I try to be so organized.

Doris: I have a pen right here.

Lisbeth: Not that organized! (Laughter, all around.)

Richard: Do you remember Phil Petersen's phone number in your head?

Doris: No.

Richard: You don't call him that often?

Doris: No.

Richard: I used to remember a whole lot of numbers but ...

Lisbeth: O.K. Phil!

Doris: Well I do too if I...

Richard: 496-6001.

Lisbeth: Well what if he is not available?

Doris: I will give you a ride.

Lisbeth: Oh, O.K.

Richard: There you go, you are in good hands. You're in good hands!

L: So you are going to the barbecue?

R: Yeah, but I've got to do a lot of other stuff in-between. To be back here by 4:30.

L: O.K. we're good.

R: But just in case.

L: O.K.

R: Then I think she's going to interview Mildred Taylor tonight.

D: Oh, I see.

R: So that will be nice too. Well good luck and have fun.

D: Well, thank you very much.

R: O.K. and I hope you can come sing with us next time.

D: Well don't plan on that, Richard.

R: Well we'll see how it goes. Ja, O.K.

L: He talked to me about singing too and I thought, aufgh!

D: How long are you up here for now?

L: I'm up here through Wednesday. I'll be leaving Wednesday afternoon.

D: I see.

L: Richard was kind enough to set up all these appointments. I came up for the Founder's Day Festival last month so I was here for that, that was wonderful.

D: Ah, great!

L: I've really gotten to know the community a little bit during the course of the summer.

D: And some of the people.

L; And met some of the people. And this, of course, is a tremendous opportunity to get to know even more people! So do you feel comfortable, are you comfortable? O.K. good and I think that if you have story that you would like to put in (to Doris) it's fine. I am going to have you both introduce yourselves on the tape. So that I will be able to distinguish who is who when I go to transcribe it. O.K. Now the oral histories that I am doing. I'm just going to give you a little background here.

D; Yes, please do.

L; So that you will understand what's going on.

D: Listen ,Mom. Listen to her now.

H: I'm not hearing too good.

D; You're not hearing too well.

H: No.

D: Is it echoing? You have it up too high, or? Can I help you? (Doris helping Mother adjust hearing aid.) That's up as high as it will go I think. Are you able to hear now?

Hilda to Doris: I can hear you alright. I don't know if I can hear her so good. (indicating Lisbeth).

Lisbeth; I'm just going to give you a little background information.

D: She just going to tell us what she's about what she is planning to do.

H: Oh, oh, ja.

D: You can listen to that.

L; These particular oral histories, will probably eventually end up in the Library at the University of Maine. I'm working with Richard so that copies of the oral histories will be available at the historical society in New Sweden or Stockholm or both places. You will also get copies of the work I do. You'll get a copy of the tape and the transcript.

D: Mom has done something similar for the Museum. And I don't know if that's going to be of any advantage. And we have a copy of that.

L: Oh, you do have a copy of that. O.K.

D: You want me to... Or do you want to do your thing.

L; Well we uh. What we may want to do is compare the two.

D: O.K.

L: And if there are inserts from the other one that would fit.

D: Well it wasn't all that extensive.

L: O.K.

D: I was the interviewer.

They were doing that on quite a routine basis. Trying to get, histories from older people.

L: Yes, well and the community up here is so unique in the State of Maine; in how it was founded; and how the people came over. It really has a fascinating history to it.

D: Yes, it has.

L; What I noticed when I was doing research on the community at the University. I did that in preparation for coming up here. I noticed there were far more oral histories on men than women.

D: Oh, really.

L: Yes, so I told Richard, specifically interested in doing oral histories on the women in the community because they are not as well represented as the men.

D: And they would give a different slant completely.

L: Of course, of course.

D: So seeing homemakers and other parts of the families.

L: That's right, that's right.

So that's how I got here and Richard was so gracious as to help set this up because I don't know anybody. I know everyone in Belfast but...

D: How long have you been in Belfast.

L: Twenty years. Right out of college. The last time I was in college.

D: Is that right?

L: I moved up to Belfast. I'm from New Jersey. And we came from Finland and moved to New Jersey.

D: How long were you in New Jersey?

L: We came from Finland in 1960. I was nine. We, of course, immigrated. We came by propeller plane, which took 22 hours from Stockholm to New York. I know isn't that wild! Post war Finland was really a sad place to be.

D: I'm sure.

L: And people were leaving, you know, as fast as they could.

D: But not coming so primitively as some people, I'm sure.

L: But we moved to New Jersey. I didn't like New Jersey at all.

D: You landed in New York then?

L: We landed in New York. We had family that lived in New Jersey. So we went to New Jersey. We set up house there. We bought a house and all that. then we started vacationing in Maine, when I was eleven, maybe a couple of years after we came here. The first time we came up to Maine I said to my parents. Now that's more like it

D: That was more like home. Wasn't it?

L: I left college at the end of my sophomore year intending to come to Maine for the summer to work. Never left. Never left, again.

D: Never left.

L: That was in 1972 and...

D: Is that, so.

L: Then I got married and had a family and now my children are almost grown so I'm back in school. Now I'm back in college. This is how it goes. All my children are home right now. I have a 16 year old, an eighteen year old and a twenty-one year old.



D: Oh, you do.

L: Yes, and they're all running around my house driving me crazy.

D: Are they really?

L: They really are!

H: Is that her family.

D: That's her family, yep. She has three children 16,18 and twenty-one. The sixteen year old is a girl and the boys are older.

L: The oldest one is very mature, he's fine. But the younger two don't have any idea of who they are or what they want to do. Well you know they are in their teen-age years and besides that they are immortal, so. so you can see what it's like and then they all have friends, too.

D: Or sure and they all congregate, right?

L: So they all been home just this last week. My oldest son was in Australia doing a semester abroad.

D: He was.

L: He just came back a week ago. And the eighteen year old just finished up a job in Florida, so he just came back from Florida but he bought two friends with him.

D: Did you know they were coming?

L: No.

D: Oh, dear.

L: So now I have three eighteen year old boys in my house. I started saying... time to move along. I don't mean to kick you out of the nest, you know but guess what? they have already been here for two weeks.

D: Oh, they have.

L: Well and then they eat so much.

D: Well of course. Did they drive up?

L: Yes they drove up. My son bought one of those big souped up Florida vans with the mirrored windows, you know. 'Cause he's been working down there. He's been working for a boat maker doing boat interiors.

D: That's a good business here, too.

Lisbeth: Ja, that's a good business here too; but I don't think he's had quite enough training. He needs to go back.

D: Good basic training probably.

L: That's right.

D; So you think he'll continue in the same place.

L: Ja, I think so.

D; Has he finished high school?

L: Oh, yup ,yup, finished high school. Well, that's enough about me , that's a little background, who I am and how I got here.

H: Did you fly up here?

L: I drove.

D; She drove up here from Belfast.

L: It's only five hours. Here's your pen. ( Lisbeth walks in front of camera and returns pen.)

O.K. now I'm going to introduce Doris and Hilda. I'm going to reintroduce us.

My name is Lisbeth Norrback I am here with the history department of the University of Maine in Orono. I am interviewing Hilda Espling, who's birthday is Nov 12 and she was born in 1894. I am also here with Doris Espling and I am going to ask each of you introduce yourselves just say who you are.

If you'll just give me your names so I'll recognize the two of you separately from the tape.

H: My name Hilda Espling.

D; And I'm Doris Espling, her daughter.

L; Very good. so I'm just going to ask you to tell me some stories of your early childhood and your experiences growing up as a woman in this community and your family life and anything you can think of that is interesting to talk about. Memories that you like. And we are in no real time hurry I have plenty of tape.

D: Well, why don't you tell how you came to this country, Mom?

H: Well, we came....

D: Well you've got to direct your voice that way. (Indicating location of microphone.)

(Problem with microphone location. Lisbeth gets up and moves the microphone.)

H: By boat.

D: Of course, why did you come?

H: And we came to Caribou. And they met us with a big wagon.

L: Horse drawn wagon?

H: Oh, yes, I'm sure.

H: I was along when my grandfather bought ( remainder of sentence inaudible.)

L: How old were you when you came?

D: How old were you when you came.( Hilda is still having trouble hearing.)

H: I was almost three years old.

L: Is that microphone comfortable for her. (Lisbeth, again, relocates mike.)

D: Tell where you lived when you first came.

H: We lived with my aunt and uncle.

D: Mr.& Mrs. Lars Storm.

H: And we got a place to live. And we both moved a little with my uncle to the Les farm. I don't know for how long. Till we build a home and got the farm. There was no land and we ourselves had to work it out.

L: You had to clear the land?

H: Yes.

D: Well tell them about going to school and..

H: I went to grammar school in Westmanland,  
I never went to high school.

L: Did you speak Swedish when you were going to school.

H: We wasn't allowed to talk Swedish in school.

L: Not allowed to talk Swedish in school?

H: No, outside but not in the schoolhouse.  
And we were used to talk in Swedish.

D: Yes, in the home.

H: And it was hard for us to understand.

L: I had that problem, too.

D: Oh, you do.

H: Then when I got home I got hired out for housekeeping.

L: Housekeeping, yep. How old were you when you started doing that? How old were you when you got out of school? Twelve, probably. (Looking to Doris for confirmation.)

H: Well, I don't know something like that.

L: Well, now when you went to do housekeeping. Did you work for friends or relatives.

H: No strangers. I worked in Presque Isle for the druggist that had two little boys. I used to take care of them alot. If they went for vacation for a few days and I would have to take care of them.

L: How old were the boys?

H: They hadn't started school.

D: How old was the younger one, Mom?

H: Two or three years old.

D: And the other one four or five.

H: Four or five, six or seven.

L: It's a long time. Well let's have you grow up a little bit. How old were you when you got married?

H: She kept house here in Caribou, too.

L: Oh, you did?

H: I was the housekeeper for a couple that had a jewelry store. And I was there for eight years until I got married. I don't remember if I was twenty-five when I got married. And that's all I can remember.

D: Tell about how you met Daddy? He was almost the same age as you were(to Hilda) he was born in June. And he had come to this country when he was...

H: 1911 he came.

L: He came in 1911. What was your husbands name.

D: John Walcriss. 'Cause his father's name was John.

L: Did you and husband speak Swedish together at home?

H: Doris couldn't talk anything else but Swedish when she first started talking.

L: Were you still speaking Swedish when you started school?

D: No, I don't think so 'cause I had started playing with English speaking children by then. I had to learn English.

H: That was all she could speak was Swedish.

D: To start with.

H: She can still speak the proper Swedish when we have guests.

D: Oh, I don't know about my Swedish, Mom.

L: Well, I speak a dialect also because, I come from Finland, you know.

H: Swedish Sunday school they go to. And the minister and the hymns was all Swedish. Prayers and anything it was all Swedish; even the singing.

L: And how about the stores in town they were probably all Swedish speaking proprietors.

D: In New Sweden.

L: I mean, I've seen pictures of New Sweden so I know at one time it was a bigger community than it is now.

D: Well, with the car coming in.

L: So you were almost three when you came to this country, a little girl. How long did the journey take?

Did you leave from Stockholm?

H: Goteborg.

D: So we are not, too, sure that's something that trying to be researched. We are not sure how they came to Boston. Whether they came by train or wagons to Westmanland. Those are the things we are not certain about.

L; And Hilda was so young she doesn't have those details. There were no records kept probably.

D: And those things, were probably not discussed in the home either, once they got here.

L: Once they got here. I know we never talked about how we got here. So you grew up on a farm then. Was it a big farm? Did you have cows? Did you have milking cows?

H; Uh, huh. A little potatoes and hay and everything.

L; When I was a child. When we used to reap the hay, as children we used to tie those bundles. The ones we used to tie in the middle.

D: Oh, really.

L; Do you remember? You stand up a pile of them, just gather a bunch of straw and tie them in the middle.

H: With the grain you mean. Yes, I usually work on that. With the binder, no not the binder. But what do you call it?

D: Well the binder would do that but before you had the binder you would do that. But it was done automatically with the binder, wasn't it. But before the binder did you tie them up.

H; No.

D: Always used the binder.

H: If it was loose, we did it. All the hard way.

L: Well we have come so far, we have so many toys now.

D: 'Cause all the activities centered around church in those days. And the neighborhoods and the neighbors helped each other.

L: Definitely. When you are so far away.... that before. When did you get your first car? Do you remember when you got your first car?

D: Second year you were married 1922.

H: Na.

D: Must have been later than that.

H: Ja, it was after that.  
We did have a car.

D: Before we went to Portland.

H: We had a Ford.

D: A model T.

L: A ford. A model T.

H: Then my husband was in the work of selling cars. So he had to go on several trips with cars.

L: So your husband was not a farmer then.

D: But when he first came to this country he worked for farmers. His father had come ahead of the family and had a farm. Did they have a farm when the family came? Was he working for somebody then?

H: I imagine, here and there. I don't remember.

D: No, No. I don't know if my grandfather had come a year or two before the family. No, it couldn't have been two years.

L: Maybe it was just a year. I know just from, I mean immigration hasn't actually changed all that much. We came in 1960. My father had to come ahead of us also and he had to be here and have a certain amount of money for each one of in the bank, in order to bring us into the country.

D: As a sponser. And then he had a sponser. Well, most people came because there were relatives.

H: My grandmother and grandfather must have sent money for us to come.  
"Cause I remember it was hard to get money in old Sweden.

D: Ever try to pay them back.

H: It was hard to get money.  
Janitor in the schoolhouse used to get fifty cents a week.

D: Was that a week or a month?

H: It was a week. But that went quite a ways. You could buy quite a few things with fifty cents.

L: Well that was when a penny was worth something.

H: Fancy things from Sears & Robuck

L: Were there actually at one time like clothing stores in the New Sweden. Could you buy all the things you needed in New Sweden at one time?

D; Well a lot of the things... They had general stores. They sold clothing and yard goods.

H: Everything!

L: So it was like a Mom and Pop operation but they had whatever you needed or they could get it for you probably.

H; They had everything but fresh meat.

L: Well, they had no refrigeration.

H: That's right, but they would have ham and bacon and korg, too

D: And korg and herring!

H: And herring and codfish!

L: And lutefisk! Ice cream!

H: What dear?

L: Ice cream, did they have ice cream, too.

H: No, no ice cream.

L: Oh, that right! No refrigeration!

H: We used to have a Sunday School picnic and we would bring cream and make ice cream.

L: In one of those old...

H: It's up at Madawaska lake. Have you been there?

L: NO! Honest.

D: Gracious not! Stan's you've heard about?

L: I've been to Stan's!

D: Oh you were at Madawaska lake!

L: Oh, that was Madawaska, lake? Oh, see I don't know my way around... I was truly impressed by Stan's! I'm going to edit this out by the way. So we can talk freely, because the tape will be edited, so we can tell all kinds of stories. I will put together.

D: A sequence

L: Ja, I'll put together. That really is concise. So that way we can really talk freely.

H: Put in the more interesting things.

D: That's O.K.

L; Yes, we can talk about anything, I will certainly edit myself for one thing.

H: Is this for a calender or what.

D: No, no Mom. On the tape. The transcript like you got from New Sweden, if you remember.

Well I think you need to tell about how neighbors help each other when you'd run out of food.

H; When you run out of food or flour, we used to have to go and borrow and then we would have to return it. When we had these big snowstorms we used to have to go on ski's to get there.

L: Did you live in New Sweden when you were married?

D: Westmanland.

H: We went to Sunday School in New Sweden and church.

D: The Covenant Church.

L: The Covenant Church was not a church I was familiar with until I came up here. I grew up Lutheran and I thought that was all there was I didn't know.

H; What church did you grow up in?

L: I grew up in the Lutheran Church, of course.

D: Well, they did too in Sweden, I'm sure.

L: So, the Covenant Church is that an off shoot then.  
Is it strictly American or is there a Covenant Church in Sweden also.

D: (to Hilda) Are there Covenant Churches in Sweden?

H; They call it the Free Mission. The minister we had started a church an he named it the Free Mission church.

D: I know. Whatever that means. I don't know.



L; The Covenant Church is completely new to me. It's a new word in my vocabulary.

D: North Park College in Chicago.

L: Well you know Dan Olsen. You've met Dan Olsen? Well, he went there!

D: My cousin did too, Natalie Larsen Selveners.

(Lisbeth looking at a photograph on the wall)

D: That's her mother. She went to North park and she met her husband there. He must have been in college when they met. But he studied to be a minister there because they have a seminary as well.

L: (referring to Dan Olsen again) And then the father is, of course, a Covenant Minister.

D: Right! Have you met him , too.

L; I've just met Dan.

H: Are you Lutheran?

L: Lutheran, ja!

H: I thought so Lutheran, from Sweden.

I can remember Mama an her sisters used to walk to the Lutheran Church.

D: Before the Covenant Church was started.

L: And how far away was that?

D: Five or six miles probably.

H: Seven or eight miles. We used to cross through the woods with the bobsled. They were smart people to be able to walk through the woods. Now people don't walk anywhere. And the schoolchildren they had to walk far. We lived handy to school so I didn't have to walk very far.

L: And they were one room schoolhouses probably.

D; But you used to go to Sunday School on the West Road.

H: Yep, in a schoolhouse that isn't there anymore. It is gone.

D: That was on Sunday after the church service in New Sweden.

H; We came from where the Covenant church is now and we used to bring our lunch and eat it at the Sunday School.

D; Do you know where the Baptist Church is?

L: The only church I know is the church in right downtown New Sweden where they had the Founder's Day dinner.

D: That must be the Lutheran Church.

L: Yep, that's the only one I know.

D; You come down the hill and first you come to the Baptist church is on the right and then the Covenant Church is on the left.

L: Oh, O.K. Alright. I'll look for it.

Oh, so you went from your house over to New Sweden to that church.

D; In the fall in New Sweden when they were digging potatoes and everything, the horses were too tired to pull the people to church; plus the children were from digging potatoes all week. But we had to preserve a....

H: Then it must have been four miles anyway or more. (To Doris) What do you think?

D; I'm not very good at estimating distances.

L: Well four miles is a good long distance to be walking one way. You know so four, five, six miles so it's all a long way to go. Now we climb in the car and go....

H: My father was a shoe maker so we always had good shoes.

L: Your father? Oh, I see.

D: He was a cobbler from the old country. But then his health was such that his doctor thought he should be working outside so he became a farmer.

H: He had gotten hurt as a young man and had a bad knee so it was hard for him to get around. he couldn't bend down.

L: Now how many brothers and sisters did you have?

H: I had two brothers the oldest one died when he was fourteen of spinal meningitis.

L; Spinal meningitis? An accident or something.

D; He had worked in the woods and got injured.

H: People didn't understand.

L: Medicine wasn't anywhere back then. How much older than you was your brother? How old was he when you came?

H: He was twelve because he went to school and I remember he had to recite a piece in English for the last day of school.

L: So he died right after you got here.

D: I was trying to remember the year he was born. He must have been 10 years older than you. He was the oldest brother.

L: What was his name?

D: Sigrud.

L: And the other brother?

D: He was younger than, Mom. Eleven years younger. He died three years ago.

L: Really so he had...

H: Well I'm the only one left in the family.

L: Well we're glad you are here, we really are.

H: Her sister was born in '93.

L: So there was a sister also Two brothers and a sister. Oh, that sister, of course, what was her name?

D: Emma. She married a widower with three children.

L: Uh, huh and had some of her own?

D: She had two. She lost the first one when she was seven of scarlet fever. Then she had another one in 1930.

L: Was there a doctor in the community when your brother got sick.

H: You mean for my older brother? We had a doctor named Hansen.

L: A Swede also.

H: They didn't know what to do.

L: I'm sure they didn't know.

D: I'm sure it was a big loss with my grandfather's handicap and all. Sigrud must have been a big help to Morfar.

H: Yes, he sure was. He used to work at the store, Albert's.

D: (To Hilda) Where was that located, Albert's?

H: You don't remember that one? It used to be located by the Covenant Church.

D: Oh, the Langstrom's Store must have changed hands.

L: So let me ask you about the original tract of land I have that map that show's everyone's tract of land. Yes, I have it hanging on my wall to get familiar with the community. Now did your family receive one of those original tracts of land?

D: I think they must have. (To Hilda) You were given the farm when you came?

H: Well, I don't know for sure.

D: You don't think so?

L: Well they came in 1897. I think that may have been after all the land was distributed.

D: It was a different tract of land than New Sweden where the first settlers came.

L: Well I'll have to look into it. Minor detail after all, I'll try and look into some of the details.

D: It will be the Axel Hedstrom tract anyway. and that was a short way from where Mommo's aunt and her family lived and close to the school. Have you been to Westmorland yet.

L: I haven't, not yet. Every time I come up I get a little more exposure and learn a little bit more.

H: Have you interviewed quite a few people?

L: You are my first interview!

H: Well you picked a poor one.

L: No you are doing fine. Oral histories are just about what you can remember and where things fit together. When I put the tape and transcript together it will read in chronological order. I've learned to work on the computer. It's one of those things I had to learn to go back to college. I'm going to be a nurse this time.

D: What were you in your other life?

L: In addition to raising the children I had a couple of toy stores for many years in Belfast and Camden.

H: Are your parents still in New Jersey?

L: Right now they are in Finland for the summer but they're coming back in a couple of weeks and they are still in New Jersey. They like it. I never did. Well, you know when you're an immigrant family. I don't know if your brother and sister all stayed around here. But when we came my brother didn't like American and went back to Finland. he was 16 when we came I was nine and he never did take to America. But you know we came in 1960 and all the sixties were so turbulent.

D: Yes, they were.

L: So anyway he was 20 when he went back. He had gone to college and become an architect. Went back to Finland and taught school there.

H: He didn't like it here.

L: He didn't like it! He didn't give up his Finnish citizenship. Eventually he moved to Australia.

H: Was he living in the city then or what?

L: Right outside of New York city in New Jersey. Anyway it was crowded and hot. I have a sister also and she stayed in the area. Which is good because my parents are getting on in years.. Everytime they go back to Finland they say, "This might be our last time.!"

D: And they go back again?

L: They just had to sell their house. Well. they had this big house, with no one left at home and they were living in their money. Their house was worth so much money and they were on a fixed income, you know. I had been saying for a long time, "You've really got to sell your house." Anyway, they sold their house last year so they have a little bit of money to live on.

H: You went to school in New Jersey?

L: I went to school in New Jersey and didn't much care for it.

H: It's pretty hard isn't it? To have to read in English and then get up and tell what you have read.

L: Can I tell you my most embarrassing story?

H: There were so many things that was hard for me to understand. 'Cause I wasn't very smart.

D: Mom, you are, too!

L: When I came I didn't speak a word of English. We came right before Christmas and I started school in January. They put me in a classroom and I didn't understand anything, nothing!

D: Must be a dreadful feeling.

H: How old were you then?

L: I was nine. I had this teacher who smelled of onions and she used to like to keep me after school and kiss me.

D: Oh, she did.

L: Yes, little kisses on the cheek, you know.

D: Oh, dear!

L: I think she was being affectionate you know but she smelled so bad! I couldn't stand her and she would keep me after school under the pretext of teaching me English. Well, I would just sit there like this the whole time. (Lisbeth squirms in her chair.)

D: You must have been nervous.

L: Well I didn't know what, you know. When you are on the spot like that I couldn't remember anything. I couldn't remember a word! I couldn't spell anything, nothing! Well, this continued to be a problem. I'm working up to my most embarrassing moment of the second grade here. Well, the problem was if I didn't do well in school I'd have to stay after school with this woman. I wasn't capable of going home and telling my parents what

was going on. You know Swedes are so, I don't know about Swedes up here. But, you know, no one talks about their feelings, no body has feelings, nobody has problems. So, of course, that is how I had been brought up, I would never think to bring my problems home.

So, I finally thought, well I came up with a plan. The plan was I had to start passing my spelling tests. Now I still didn't speak any English! I was supposedly learning. Well, I used to take a "crib" sheet into my spelling tests so I could pass the tests and I wouldn't have to stay after school. Well, she caught me!

D: She caught you?

L: Talk about an embarrassing moment! She made me stand up in front of the class! I didn't know what she was saying but I knew it wasn't good.

D: What you are not supposed to do.

L: So that was my predicament. It's hard to sit in a classroom and not speak English.

D: Or know what's going on.

L: So your teachers weren't bilingual?

D: No.

L: Isn't that interesting. There's this whole bilingual community but your teachers weren't bilingual.

H: Most teachers were right out of high school and they expect them to teach.

L: Right, of course.

D: Were there any Swedes who taught you? Just your Aunt Selma

H: Well there was Selma Larsen and a Nielsen?

D: Would they let you speak Swedish in the classroom?

(There's a knock at the door.)

Hilda to Lisbeth: So we've been in the same boat.

L: Yes, we've been in the same boat. do you remember how long it took you to speak English once you got into school?

H: I picked it up little by little.

Lisbeth speaking off camera. It's O.K. I can turn this off and we can start again.

(The remainder of this transcript is off Audio tape only.)

L: So well, my goodness, your husband died in 1937 at age 43.

He had just been 43 in June and he died in the end of July.

L: Suddenly?

H: Well his kidneys didn't function,

L: Kidneys certainly are amazing. You know what I thought of this morning? I thought how amazing our kidneys are. All night long the kidneys never stop, like our heart and everything else.

So did he have kidney failure? They didn't work?

L: And that was before dialysis.

D: Its what they call nephritis. Drown really.

L: In his own fluid. 43 is so young.

H: And I was 43 then in November.

L: So you took in boarders.

H: School children. Children that couldn't travel back and forth to high school. They didn't travel much with cars anyway. It's too snowy. They had both dinner and supper.

L: So you heat with wood.

H: Did you have a house when your husband left you?

L: I got the house and the mortgage. We had just bought the house ten months earlier.

H: You still have that house?

L: No I sold that house. My house was an old schoolhouse in Monroe. It was built in 1905. It was quite a little house but always drafty.

H: You stay at the Motor Inn?

(To Doris) You know that?

L: I was just telling your mother that I stayed with friends on my first trip up here. Students, you know, from school. I had to sleep on the floor. That was it. So last time I came up when it was 100 degrees. I thought the Caribou Motor Inn looked really good. And you know that's it, you really don't have a choice.

H: Well, there's the Day's Inn.

L: But they don't have a pool!

D: You like a pool?

L: I thought I might as well try and make it fun.

D: Absolutely.

H: What was your name then?

L: Norrback, Lisbeth Maria Norrback from Overmark, Finland. Espling, so what was your maiden name, Hedstrom. You weren't married all that long. You were married for seventeen years?

H: I was married 1919 on Memorial Day. We didn't have a wedding or anything. We just got married at the parsonage here in town. And I am a Methodist now.

L: Your husband's name was John. So was it love at first sight?

H: I guess he did with me. I didn't understand. He kept calling me.

L: Bothering you. Well, you were a beautiful young woman. (Looking at a picture hanging on the wall.) How old were you in this picture.

H: Well I don't know that either. I'm not sure. I suppose I was in my teens, I think, eighteen or nineteen probably.

L: Well it's a wonderful picture. Lovely!

H: Thank you. Where did you meet your husband.

L: We met at school. I was very young myself.

H: You must have been.

L: He was a little older, three years. He lives in Portland. He's remarried and has a baby. He had a baby a month ago. he's 46 now and has a baby!

D: 46 with a baby.

L: Little tiny baby, a little girl. Well, you know he didn't really do it the first time around. He only saw the children a few times a year in the last sixteen years, so he never really raised a family.

H: Does he come around and see the children very much?

L: Well, you know the thought of starting again at 46. So you were taking care of your husband and your daughter and it was during the depression. I expect the depression up here had to be pretty severe. So how many years did you take in boarders?

H: When Doris went to high school for four years. And she took a business course in Bangor at Husson. And I went with her 'cause I couldn't have a place here.

D: She couldn't have an apartment here and there and there were no dormitories for me to stay in.

L: So you two girls were out on your own at fourteen and forty-two.

D: My dad had taken care of business, you know, as far as the bills. We did have a car but I wasn't able to drive. Too young for one thing.

H: And I couldn't drive.



D: Mom wasn't driving. and her brother was going to teach her and very kindly told her that she could never learn to drive.

H: He said I couldn't drive. But I did drive a little when I was up to the neighbors. I did alright but I didn't go and take any test. When Doris was old enough she took over and she has been driving ever since. she drove to Florida once. Doris and I by ourselves.

L: You did? That's a long trip!

H: And we made it right to the door where my brother and sister-in-law was living.

D: They live in Gulfport.

L: So your husband had brothers and sister, too. He came over by himself or he came over with family.

D: He came over with his brother.

H: Then she had two more after they came here.

L: Now have you ever been married. (To Doris)

D: No, I've never been married that's why my name is Espling.

L: Well, you know we women now-a-days use our maiden names. I couldn't wait to get rid of my married name after I got divorced. I went right back to my maiden name. That's enough of that I thought.

H: You like the children.

L: Ja, I like my children. I like the age they are. I wouldn't want younger ones.

D: Did you work when your children were younger.

L: Well, I did the only thing I could do when the children were younger; I worked in a day care center. so I had my three children plus I had eighteen other children and there were two of us but still..

D: That's alot eighteen children.

L: I did that for four years until my daughter was old enough to go to kindergarten. And then I was done! It was time to stop because I could no longer speak like an adult. I talked to everyone like they were four years old no matter how old they were.

So, you never got married what happened? I mean you must have had suitors everywhere. men knocking at the door of the career girl. Is that right?

D: Well, I started working. Mom was working, too. She was working at the cafeteria at the high school. For seven years I think. But her knees got so bad she should have quit long before. she stopped working in her fifties must have been close to sixty.

H: Then we went to Bangor. We got a place with my second cousin.

D; She had a beauty parlor in the front room. Mom would sit and listen to the same conversation all day long. It was the same story with everyone who came in.

H: And then she didn't need a housekeeper. And her folks lived in New Sweden. so she wanted to know if I would go over and stay at the house while she was gone. When no one came to take my place so I stayed on and on. so I worked my board for me and Doris. I did all the work, all the washing and the cooking for staying.

L: That's quite a trade off. That's a lot of work isn't it?

D: I wonder if they appreciated it.

L: Yup, yup, you could get a permanent once in a while.

H: So I've had it.

L: I don't blame you. OK, well take a break and have some coffee.  
(Inaudible discussion of Certificate of Reparation)

L: Isn't that amazing that at one time you could actually loose your citizenship by marrying a foreigner. And he had papers he was allowed to be here.

D; I know it!

L: Remarkable! This is (looking at certificate of alienship) is exactly like my naturalization papers.

H: Did you have a hard time to get them?

L: It didn't seem like it but I was still a child.  
So you didn't get repatriated until you were fifty years old and you lost it in 1919. Well, that is an interesting piece of history.

D; And this is my grandfather's certificate of naturalization. He was 47 when he was naturalized. You see Sigrud was already gone by that time. (to Hilda) You were 14 and they have you as Hilda Sophia. Here's Emma Louisa they have her at 15. Mom, goes by the name of Louisa I don't know where Sophia comes from.

H: They made a mistake on my name or so.

L: Was it a happy childhood? Did you have a happy childhood?

H: We didn't know anything else.

D: Where you didn't have anything to compare it to.

L: It was hard work, a lot of hard work, the farm.

D: That it was.

H: The neighbors used to get together and visit, like over Christmas with Julgobbin.

L: When did your parents die?

D: Morfar died in 1941. The year I was a senior. then my grandmother died in 1944. she died the year we came back from Bangor.  
(inaudible portion of audio tape.)

D: If he was 47 in 1909 and he died in '41 then he was 79 when he died.

(Lisbeth looking at old photos.) This is a nice picture Hilda. You were a young widow here.

H: That's when I was working in the cafeteria.

L: You were working at the cafeteria here. In 1945 you had already been a widow for seven years. Did you have long hair here, piled up?

D: Well, she had it piled up. I guess she needed a perm like she does now.

L: I don't get permanents anymore.

D: You don't.

L: No, I don't the last permanent I had I'll never forget. It was in 1989 and my hair stood straight out. I looked like Bozo for six months. I say that that Christmas we didn't have any candles I was concerned about spontaneous combustion.

H: When I had my last perm it looked nice when I first came home. But you know it was just too hot and the hair broke off. And it didn't stay at all.

D: No keeping ability.

H: Then we tried home perms.

L: Anything to stay looking beautiful.

D: (To Lisbeth) So you have a little natural curl.

L: I have a little and that I am still blonde amazes me.

D; Well, of course, grey hair doesn't show up in blonde hair.

L: I keep looking. My uncle Erik said, that if I was just patient grey hair would come. Comforting thought. Well, so it's quite a life! Have you stayed speaking Swedish with the people in the community. Do you speak Swedish, Doris?

D; No, I can't.

H: Now we don't it at all now.

L: I noticed that when I came up here that no one converses in Swedish anymore. It's easier in English, you know!

D; Well it is, and so many of Mom's peers are gone.

L: Isn't there anybody else that's a hundred left?

H: I had a friend that came from Sweden and she couldn't talk English. The woman that she worked for couldn't understand her. so they called me. And I had to go and straighten it out.

D: The interpreter.

H: (To Lisbeth) Does your children talk Swedish?

L: No, they don't.

D; Now do your parents still speak Swedish as well as Finnish?

L: Well just Swedish. There is a portion of Finland that is just Swedish speaking

D; OK

L: It's actually the coastal strip of Finland that runs up the Gulf of Bothnia because Finland belonged to Sweden for 800 years. so they just migrated over to Finland where there was available land. So we are Swedes.

D; Just basically Swedes.

L: We've just been in Finland. My family has been traced back there for 800 years.

D: Oh, I see.

H: Now the Finnish do they have a language?

L: Finnish is very different from Swedish, a Slavic derivative.

H: Something like Danish probably.

L: No, Swedish and Danish are very similar.

D; So is Norwegian.

L: I think Finnish is more like Russian and other Slavic languages. It's a hard sounding language. And they also spell out everything.  
A hundred years is a long time to be around. Do you think you are going to stick around a while longer?

D; Are you going to be around a while longer beyond your hundred years?

H: Don't know.

D: Only God knows.

L: Were you lonely after your husband died.

H: I was lonely and I was busy.

L: (To Doris) and how much longer were you in a cast. I mean your father died and you were in a cast?

D: I didn't have the cast until 1935. I was using crutches. I used crutches through my sophomore year. I used a cane in my senior year.

L: So the limp you have is from that.

D: Well, I've had a hip replacement. I was a choir rehearsal when I felt something snap. I had never experienced anything like it. But they could see something was wrong and they had to carry me out.

L: Well you're not very big.

D: Well, I know but the man who carried had already had a hip replacement. I was concerned something was going to happen to him but he carried me anyway.

H: So she had a walker and I had a walker. And that was in January, I saw a doctor locally.

H: I don't know how we managed.

L: I don't know how you managed either. Did you have someone shop for you, for your groceries?

D: The neighbors help each other out. I had a good neighbor up the street she worked at Loring.